

HEARING PANEL REPORT

This matter was heard on November 4, 2016 in Fresno, California before a panel consisting of Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board members Denise Kadara, Carmen Ramirez, and Board Chair Karl Longley. Assistant Executive Officer Adam Laputz, Patrick Pulupa, and Andrew Deeringer were Panel Advisors. Robin Singh appeared on behalf of Singh Farms, LLC (Discharger). Kailyn Ellison, Brett Stevens, and Sue McConnell appeared for the Prosecution Team.

The Panel makes the following determinations:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Pursuant to California Water Code (Water Code) section 13323, subdivision (a), under the Waste Discharge Requirements for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group (Order R5-2012-0116-R3 or East San Joaquin Order), Members are required to submit annual Farm Evaluation reports.
2. A person who fails to submit a technical report under Water Code section 13267 when so requested by the Board may be liable civilly under section 13268. The Board may impose such liability administratively in accordance with Water Code section 13323 in an amount not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each day in which the violation occurs.
3. On 7 December 2012, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board or board), approved the Waste Discharge Requirements General Order (Order R5-2012-0116 or General Order) for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group and the General Order's corresponding Monitoring and Reporting Program.
4. The General Order serves as general waste discharge requirements under Water Code section 13263 for both direct and indirect waste discharges that result from runoff, leaching, irrigation water, and storm water, that could affect the ground or surface waters of the state. The Dischargers' agricultural parcel is located within the General Order's coverage area.
5. On 2 May 2014, Singh Farms, LLC enrolled 10 parcels in the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (Coalition) as an operator, thus obtaining coverage under the East San Joaquin Order. The parcels that the Discharger enrolled are Madera County Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 044-240-003, 046-030-002, 046-050-020, 046-050-021, 046-050-022, 046-080-002, 046-080-003, 046-090-027, 047-200-003, and 048-020-002. These parcels have a total area of 593 acres.

6. On 16 December 2015, the Central Valley Water Board staff requested that the Coalition provide a list of its members who failed to submit Farm Evaluations for 2013 and/or 2014. The Discharger appeared on this list.
7. On 22 February 2016, Board staff sent the Discharger a Notice of Violation (NOV) via certified mail for failure to submit the 2014 Farm Evaluation. The NOV urged the Discharger to submit the evaluation to the Coalition and warned that failure to do so may result in enforcement action by the Central Valley Water Board.
8. On 19 April 2016, the Coalition sent the Board a list of members who had not submitted the 2015 Farm Evaluation or the previous years' Farm Evaluations. The list indicated that the Discharger had not submitted the 2014 and 2015 Farm Evaluations.
9. On 6 May 2016, the Prosecution Team sent the Discharger a notification letter (pre-ACL letter) via Federal Express that an Administrative Civil Liability (ACL) Complaint would be issued if the Discharger did not submit the missing Farm Evaluations and initiate settlement negotiations prior to issuance of the ACL Complaint. The Discharger did not submit the missing Farm Evaluations or contact the Board in response to the pre-ACL letter.
10. On 8 August 2016, pursuant to Water Code section 13268, Andrew Altevogt, Assistant Executive Officer of the Central Valley Water Board and lead prosecutor for the Prosecution Team, issued an ACL Complaint R5-2016-0548 to the Discharger in the proposed amount of fifty-nine thousand one hundred fifty dollars (\$59,150) for failing to submit the 2014 and 2015 Farm Evaluations as required by the Waste Discharge Requirements for Growers within the Eastern San Joaquin River Watershed that are Members of the Third-Party Group (Order R5-2012-0116-R3).
11. On 16 August 2016 and 26 September 2016, the Discharger submitted the 2014, and 2015 Farm Evaluations to the Coalition following issuance of the ACL Complaint.
12. On 17 November 2008 the State Water Resources Control Board adopted Resolution No. 2009-0083 amending the Water Quality Enforcement Policy (Enforcement Policy). The Enforcement Policy establishes a methodology for assessing discretionary administrative civil liability. Use of the methodology addresses the factors used to assess a penalty under Water sections 13327 and 13385 subdivision (e) including the Dischargers' culpability, history of violations, ability to pay and continue in business, economic benefit, and other factors as justice may require.

13. The required factors under Water code section 13327 have been considered using the methodology in the Enforcement Policy as explained in detail in Attachment A to the Order, which is incorporated herein by reference.
14. On considering the written record and evidence presented at the hearing, the Panel determined that an administrative civil liability of forty-six thousand four hundred seventy-five dollars (\$46,475) should be imposed on the Discharger pursuant to Water Code section 13268 for violation of Water Code section 13267.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The failure to submit the 2014 and 2015 Farm Evaluation reports constitutes a violation of Water Code section 13323.
2. Pursuant to Water Code section 13268, subdivision (b)(1), the Regional Board may impose administrative civil liability up to \$1,000 for each day of violation.
3. The total maximum amount of Administrative Civil Liability assessable for the violations alleged in Complaint No. R5-2016-0548 pursuant to Water Code section 13268 is \$686,000.

RECOMMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE CIVIL LIABILITY AMOUNT

The Panel recommends that the Central Valley Regional Board impose administrative civil liability in the amount of \$46,475 on the Dischargers for violations found herein to have been committed by the Dischargers. A proposed Draft ACL Order is attached.

I, ADAM LAPUTZ, Assistant Executive Officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of the recommendation issued by this Hearing Panel for the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region.



Adam Laputz
Assistant Executive Officer

12.6.16

Date